DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 158 277 CS 204 253

AUTHOR McCaleb, Joseph L.
TITLE Use of a Reinforcing Module to Maintain Linguistically-Oriented Attitudes.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 20p.; Research prepared at the University of Maryland

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Changing Attitudes; Educational Research; *English Education; English Instruction; Higher Education; Language Attitudes; *Language Instruction; Language Research; Linguistic Theory; *Positive Reinforcement; Program Effectiveness; *Student Teachers; *Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

Research studies indicate that beginning teachers choose instructional procedures which conflict with their methods courses and that language is the least well-taught of the English instruction components. To deal with both problems in teacher preparation, a study was devised to analyze the effects of a reinforcing module in language instruction, designed to maintain linguistically-oriented teaching attitudes in student teachers who had a background of two or more courses in linguistics. For the study, the 55 student teachers supervised through the English education office of a university participated in one of three self-instructional modules: persuasion in the English class, media study, or language instruction (the experimental condition). All of the modules required students to respond to a simulated problem by preparing both written responses to specific questions and an audio-taped response to the situation. Attitude changes were assessed through a modified version of the Language Inquiry developed by Ellen Frogner (1969). Results indicated that student teaching, in general, was not conducive to the maintenance of linguistically-oriented attitudes, and that, while course work in language studies develops these attitudes, the experimental module presented at the same time as student teaching provided adequate reinforcement of linguistically-oriented attitudes. (MAI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Joseph L. McCaleb

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Joseph L. McCaleb

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

ED158277

Use of a Reinforcing Module to Maintain Linguistically-Oriented Attitudes

In discussing the preparation of teachers in the area of English composition, Braddock (1969) cited two noteworthy studies of classroom performance: Scofield's demonstration that beginning teachers choose instructional procedures which conflict with their methods courses and the Squire-Appleby report which concluded that language, of the three major components was the least well taught. These studies along with numerous others demonstrated that English educators have not resolved the complex puzzle of theory-into-practice. The products of progressive English education programs have continued to revert to traditional prescriptive patterns. This study investigated the use of a reinforcing module to maintain linguistically-oriented attitudes in student teachers. Linguistically-oriented attitudes were defined as attitudes toward language and the teaching of language which are similar to the predominant position of linguists.

The Problem

The primary interest of the researcher was with the design and effectiveness of a teacher education program. Language instruction was selected because a primary objective of English education programs is the preparation of English teachers who practice appropriate language instruction. The need for improved instructional practices has been documented by Squire and Appleby (1968) and others. The nature of language instruction has been considered especially relevant to the culturally-different student (Marckwardt, 1968; Naremore, 1970, Shuy, 1973), and it appeared to be especially timely due to the basics movement. Language attitudes were emphasized because attitudes were considered to exert "a directive or dynamic influence" upon behavior (Allport, 1935, p. 810).

The general design of an English education program consists of developing appropriate attitudes and knowledges through course work and of translating these attitudes into appropriate instructional practices under supervised field experiences. Ideally the teachers experience no

CS204253

conflict as they pass from theory to field experience and on into regular classroom teaching. Positions refined through experience and research are uniformly taught and practiced. However, since the general demise of the laboratory school and the increased role of the professional teachers' organizations, the teacher educator is often restricted from providing field experiences which complement the attitudes established through earlier course work. The general problem can be stated: How can a teacher educator design a program when dissonance exists among the components?

Methodology

Research Hypothesis

The study analyzed the effect of a module upon the language attitudes of student teachers who had previously taken at least two courses in linguistics. The research hypothesis was: When student teachers have language studies background and are in a dissonant environment, those who complete a reinforcing module will have more linguistically-oriented attitude change than the student teachers who do not complete the module

Subjects

All student teachers supervised through the English Education Office at the University [redacted] during one semester were included in the study. Of the 55 students initially enrolled in student teaching, 50 completed the semester and all components of the study. Student teaching assignments were in the areas of English, reading, and journalism and were for grades 7-12.

Design

The overall design of the study consisted of four parts: (a) assessing the need, (b) identifying influences suggested by previous research and by analysis of the local situation, (c) designing components to control the influences, and (d) assessing changes.

Assessing the need. The rapid advances in linguistics through the past few decades produced some optimism that "the battle of usage has been won" (Russell in McDavid, 1965, p. 51). However, Marckwardt (1968), Pooley (1968), Johnson (1968) and others have cited the continued existence of English teachers who "still hold the view in whole or in part that language is God-given, absolute, universal, and grammatically prescriptive" (Johnson, 1968, p. 41). The recent popularity of back-to-the-basics has fortified such positions (Jencks, 1978; Judy, 1975). Both the likelihood of the new teacher encountering teachers with traditional prescriptive language attitudes and practices and the current pressures for basics indicate the need not just for developing linguistically-oriented attitudes in prospective teachers but for insuring that these attitudes will not be reversed upon the initial contact with a dissonant environment.

Identifying influences. A review of research in language attitudes identified four major areas of influence: language study, teaching models, practical experience, and teaching environment. The influence of language study, which included course work, specially constructed modules, and inservice workshops, tended to produce more linguistically-oriented attitudes (Barnes, 1973; Black, 1973; Frogner, 1969; Galvan & Troike, 1972; Hess, 1969; Howell, 1973; Hubble, 1972; Palmer, 1969; Walker, 1974).

Only two of the studies included modular components. Hubble's (1972) module included instruction on (a) the culturally diverse learner and his education, (b) adolescent needs, and (c) pedagogical principles and teaching the culturally diverse learner. Students developed model teaching units and simulated teaching them. The results of this treatment condition showed no significant differences between groups on the attitude measures she used.

Walker (1974) found some attitude change in her experimental group which completed a module containing instruction about the nature of language and a study of the responses by linguists to statements on her instrument. The effectiveness of the experimental design was uncertain due to procedural questions about such things as randomization and to questions about the instrument: "the validity and reliability of the instrument may be subject to question" (p. 121).

These studies suggested the potential effectiveness of the modular strategy although it was not clearly demonstrated. None of the research reported the use of a module as a reinforcing component, nor did it give special consideration for dissonant environments.

Peters (1971) studied possible effects of cooperating teachers' language attitudes upon student teachers and found the student teachers to move significantly toward the positions of the cooperating teachers. The influence of teaching models was therefore suggested. The other two major areas of influence, practical experience and teaching environment, were often discussed, especially in descriptive studies, but received limited analysis under controlled conditions (Barnes, 1973; McKeown, 1968; Womack, 1959).

Because of the theoretical importance and the research evidence for course work in linguistics or language study, this variable was controlled in the study. Research indicated that one class may not be adequate for establishing linguistically-oriented attitudes (Frogner, 1969; Hubble, 1972; McKeown, 1968). Therefore, the student teachers in this study were divided into two groups: those with two or more classes in linguistics or language study (n = 26) and those with fewer than two classes (n = 28). Language studies background was defined as having taken two or more classes. Student teachers were randomly assigned from these two groups to the control and experimental conditions.

One other variable from the theoretical model received consideration: the nature of the student teaching environment. Based upon the research reviewed and the findings of a pilot study, characteristics were identified as potential contributors to a dissonant condition. The term "dissonant" was used to indicate a student teaching environment which would not be conducive to the maintenance of linguistically-oriented attitudes. These characteristics were defined as dissonant: (a) student teaching in junior high school and (b) student teaching in high school when the class' study included systematic treatment of grammar. The first characteristic was suggested by the reports of research by Frogner (1969), Hess (1969), and Wingler (1972). The pilot study suggested that the supervising teachers had more traditional language attitudes than the student teachers.

Therefore, it was decided that dissonance would be especially likely to occur during a study of grammar. Forty of the students were found to be in student teaching conditions thus defined as dissonant.

Designing the components. The research hypothesis suggested that language study was necessary for the development of linguistically oriented attitudes but not sufficient for the pressures often found in student teaching. Therefore, three self-instructional modules were designed by the researcher. All modules required students to respond to a simulated problem by preparing written responses to specific questions regarding the situation and by preparing an audio-taped response to the situation. The language module was the experimental condition. Members of the control group completed either a module on the use of persuasion in the English class or a module about the inclusion of media study in the English class.

The simulated problem in the language module established a situation in which the student teachers were to role play a teacher who would respond to the concerns of parents over the "grammar issue." Parents were depicted as expressing a desire for the return to traditional grammar study so that their children would be able to write better. In completing the module, students researched the issue and prepared written responses to 16 questions. (For example, What general conclusions can be drawn regarding the relationship of traditional grammar and writing ability? What is the relationship between standard dialect and "making it in society"?) Three weeks after writing the responses the students prepared an audio-taped response to a simulated speaking situation with the parents. Students used the written responses as a basis for the audio-taped comments. Completion of both phases of the module required approximately four hours.

The theoretical framework for the modules generally followed the description of Miller and Burgoon (1973): the "persuasive task is not to reverse an existing attitude, but rather to reinforce already existing attitudes and behaviors, to make them more resistant to change" (p. 10).

Miller and Burgoon discussed strengthening commitment to a position by making an oral statement about that belief and by participating in a role-playing activity. The module was designed to operationalize this strategy by encouraging student teachers (a) to develop a position on an issue in language instruction in accordance with research findings and (b) to vocalize this position in a role-playing simulation.

Assessing change. The selection of an instrument was recognized as a crucial dimension to the study. The language attitude research evidenced a limited amount of attention to the validity and reliability of instruments. Therefore, a pilot study was included primarily to refine and test the instrument.

The instrument selected was the Language Inquiry which was developed by Ellen Frogner (1969). Frogner had validated the instrument against the responses of ten linguists and had analyzed the items to insure content validity. Some attention to reliability was given through test-retest comparisons although no coefficients were presented. The results from over 800 respondents were presented in sufficient detail for extended analysis of the instrument.

This researcher revised the instrument (a) by replacing the "no opinion" response with "moderately disagree," to produce four response options: agree, moderately agree, moderately disagree, and disagree, (b) by reducing the inventory from 100 to 50 items, and (c) by selecting items which contained greatest agreement among linguists and which had discriminated between linguists and respondents in Frogner's research.

The pilot study confirmed the validity and reliability of the instrument which had been selected and revised. The 50-item adaptation, Language Inquiry Form B, yielded reliability coefficients of internal consistency ranging from .80 to .91 in three testings. The internal consistency measure was coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951). Additional evidence of reliability was found in a test-retest correlation of .84 with 26 subjects and a time span of 10 weeks separating the tests.

In addition to the indications of validity produced by Frogner, the pilot study found support for the validity of the instrument by asking teachers for their preferences in type of language study. Those who selected "traditional" were most removed from the position of linguists ($n = 12$, $\bar{x} = 102$). Those who selected "structural" were closest to the linguists ($n = 14$, $\bar{x} = 82.5$). The linguists' position was scored as 50.

Procedure

The revised instrument, Language Inquiry Form B, was administered as a pretest during the first week of the semester and as a posttest 12 weeks later. The written portion of the module was conducted in the seventh week and the audio-taped portion during the tenth week.

Analysis of variance with gain scores was selected for the statistical test and the .05 level was chosen to indicate significant differences. The correlation between the pretest and posttest was recognized as the key factor in choosing between analysis of variance with gain scores and covariance. Scores were graphed and visually confirmed for a linear relationship between the two measures. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was computed and found to be .813. According to Ray (1960), either analysis of variance with gain scores or covariance can be used with about equal precision when the correlation is that high. The use of gain score is also defended by Overall and Woodward (1975) for a statistical analysis such as was required for this hypothesis. Analysis of variance was also selected because of the ease of presentation of results.

Results

The primary test of the hypothesis concerned the student teachers who had previously taken two or more linguistics classes and who were student teaching in an environment defined as dissonant. Ten student teachers meeting that description were in the control group and ten were in the experimental group. The experimental group significantly differed from the control group in language attitude change. The student teachers

in the experimental group moved closer to the linguists changing from a mean pretest score of 78.5 to a mean posttest score of 72.8. Student teachers in the control group moved away from the linguists' position changing from 81.6 to 85.2. The analysis is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Insert Table 2 about here.

Discussion

Because the literature suggested the importance of several influences, the effects of the variables other than the module were also investigated. Analysis of the data confirmed the importance of language instruction but indicated a need for more careful identification of dissonant environments.

Language Studies Background

Course work appeared to be a significant influence in developing linguistically-oriented attitudes but insufficient for maintaining them through dissonant experiences. The significant influence of course work was indicated through a comparison of pretest scores of student teachers with language studies background (two or more courses) and those without language studies background (fewer than two courses). The groups were significantly different at the .05 level as the language studies background group had a mean score of 80.12 and the student teachers without language studies background had a mean score of 88.14. The analysis is indicated in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Because of the nature of the research hypothesis, two rival hypotheses were also examined. One hypothesis would explain the difference between the experimental and control groups as a result of the previous course work. The other hypothesis would disregard the importance of language studies background and explain the change in terms of the experimental condition alone. These hypotheses were analyzed through a 2 x 2 factorial design to show main effects and interaction effects. The research hypothesis suggested an interaction effect between language studies background and experimental condition. The results supported the research hypothesis with a significant interaction effect and failed to support the rival hypotheses as both main effects were not significant. (See Table 4.)

Insert Table 4 about here.

Dissonant Environments

Separate comparison of students in the environments defined as dissonant with students in environments not so defined failed to show any significant difference. Also when the environmental variable was dropped and the experimental group of student teachers with language studies background was compared with the control group of student teachers with language studies background, the significant difference was still found. These analyses suggested that characteristics which contribute to a dissonant environment were not accurately predicted in the study.

The nature of the student teaching environment was examined more closely. Evidence was found which confirmed the expectation that student teaching in general was a somewhat dissonant experience. The analysis included a comparison of attitude change of student teachers with similar students who were not yet student teaching. A separate group of preservice teachers responded to the pretest and posttest during the same semester as the student teachers. Because these students were at earlier stages in their academic programs, most of them had not taken over one course in

language studies. This group of 17 students showed a mean change of 14.29 toward the position of linguists. Student teachers with comparable language studies background showed an average change of 3.00 toward the position of the linguists. Although the analysis of this additional group was viewed cautiously due to uncontrolled differences between them and the student teachers, the results suggested that the student teaching environment may be less conducive to linguistically-oriented attitudes than the university atmosphere.

One other observation suggested dissonance due to the student teaching environment. Although the procedures of statistical analysis emphasized the groups' averages, the primary concern of the teacher education program was recognized as the individual teacher (Good, Biddle, & Brophy, 1975, p. 44). Even if the average of the group shows improvement, the teacher educator should be concerned if some individual teachers move strongly away from linguistically-oriented attitudes. For this reason special attention was paid to the variance within the groups. This produced a better indication of what was happening with the attitudes of the individual teachers. Examination of the variance showed teachers in the experimental group to be more stable than teachers in the control group. This was especially true for the student teachers who had language studies background. Student teachers in the experimental group with language studies background had a mean change score of 5.36 toward the position of linguists with a standard deviation of 6.58. Student teachers in the control group who also had language studies background showed a mean change score of 2.17 away from the linguists with a standard deviation considerably larger, 10.69. These differences in variance suggested that the initial attitudes may have been somewhat unstable. When confronted with the conditions of student teaching, several preservice teachers appeared to need a reinforcing experience to maintain the linguistically-oriented attitudes.

Implications

The following educational recommendations seem valid as a result of the investigation of language attitude change of student teachers.

1. The importance of course work in language studies for the development of linguistically attitudes was confirmed. More than one course should be included in English education programs.

2. The need for such course work for other teachers should be explored.

3. Although linguistically-oriented attitudes appeared to be developed through course work, the attitudes needed reinforcement when confronted with the conditions of student teaching. The strength and stability of language attitudes need continued investigation.

4. A modular component presented at the same time as the student teaching experience appeared to provide adequate reinforcement of linguistically-oriented attitudes.

5. Study should be given to the use of a reinforcing module for other attitudes and behaviors which may undergo a regressive pattern when surrounded by traditional teaching patterns.

References

Allport, G. W. Attitudes. In C. Murchison (Ed.), A handbook of social psychology. Worchester, Mass.: Clark University Press, 1935.

Barnes, E. M. The effects of using a self-instructional module on teacher perceptions of attitudes and values of disadvantaged inner-city black youth (Doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University, 1973). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1973, 34, 645-A. (University Microfilms No. 73-18,862)

Black, J. A. The effect of instruction in general semantics on ethnic prejudice. Research in the teaching of English, 1973, 7, 98-108.

Braddock, R. English composition. In R. L. Ebel (Ed.), Encyclopedia of educational research (4th ed.). London: Macmillan, 1969.

Cronbach, L. J. Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. Psychometrika, 1951, 16, 297-334.

Frogner, E. A. A study of the responses to the Language Inquiry. Urbana, Ill.: Illinois State-Wide Curriculum Study Center in the Preparation of Secondary School English Teachers, 1969.

Galvan, M. M., & Troike, R. C. The East Texas dialect project: A pattern for education. In R. D. Abrahams & R. C. Troike (Eds.), Language and cultural diversity in American education. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972.

Good, T., Biddle, B., & Brophy, J. Teachers make a difference. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1975.

Hess, K. M. The language attitudes and beliefs of Minnesota elementary and high school English teachers (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1968). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1969, 30, 304-A. (University Microfilms No. 69-11,402)

Howell, M. M. The impact of an inservice education program on the attitude and behavior of certain teachers of the English language in Pinellas County, Florida (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1972). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1973, 33, 5601-A. (University Microfilms No. 73-10,330)

Hubble, M. W. Multicultural curriculum training with pre-student teachers in language arts (Doctoral dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1972). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1972, 33, 2073-A. (University Microfilms No. 72-30,729)

Jencks, C. The wrong answer for schools is: (b) Back to the basics. Washington Post, 1978, February 19, section C, 1,4-5.

Johnson, R. S. A comparison of English teachers' own usage with their attitudes toward usage (Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1968). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1970, 31, 377-A. (University Microfilms No. 70-12,520)

Judy, S. Who resurrected bonehead English? English Journal, 1975, 64, no. 4, 6-7.

Marckwardt, A. H. (Ed.). Language and language learning. Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968.

McDavid, R. I. (Ed.). An examination of the attitudes of the NCTE toward language. Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965.

McKeown, L. F. A survey of opinions about English held by secondary language arts teachers (Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1968). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1969, 30, 1053-A. (University Microfilms No. 69-14,287)

Miller, G. R., & Burgoon, M. New techniques of persuasion. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

Naremore, R. C. Teacher differences in attitudes toward children's speech characteristics. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Minneapolis, Minn., March 6, 1970. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 039 307)

Overall, J. E., & Woodward, J. A. Unreliability of difference scores: A paradox for measurement of change. Psychological Bulletin, 1975, 82, 85-86.

Palmer, C. N. A study of attitudes of teachers toward the modern linguistic approach to the teaching of English (Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1968). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1969, 30, 1054-A. (University Microfilms No. 69-14,310)

Peters, W. H. An investigation of the influence of cooperating teachers in shaping the attitudes of student teachers toward the teaching of English. Lexington, Ken.: University of Kentucky, 1971. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 074 052)

Pooley, R. C. Teaching usage today and tomorrow. English Journal, 1967, 56, 742-746.

Ray, W. S. An introduction to experimental design. New York: Macmillan, 1960.

Shuy, R. The linguistic problem of teachers. In J. S. DeStefano (Ed.), Language, society, and education: A profile of black English. Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones, 1973.

Squire, J. R., & Appleby, R. K. High school English instruction today. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968.

Walker, A. S. The effect of the utilization of selected sociolinguistic concepts and skills on attitudes of prospective teachers (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1973). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1974, 34, 4722-A. (University Microfilms No. 74-3,878)

Wingler, E. F. The attitudes and beliefs of English educators: Three perspectives (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1972). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1972, 33, 2827-A. (University Microfilms No. 72-19,960)

Womack, W. T. Teachers' attitudes toward current usage. English Journal, 1959, 48, 186-190.

Table 1

Scores on the Language Inquiry Form B

Group	N	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest	Mean Change	Standard Deviation
Experimental	10	78.50	72.80	-5.70	6.83
Control	10	81.60	85.20	3.60	11.14

Table 2

Analysis of Variance Concerning the Effects of the Module

Source	df	MS	F-ratio
Treatment	1	432.45	5.07 (sig)
Error	18	85.36	

Table 3

Pretest Scores on the Language Inquiry Form B

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	F-ratio
<2 Classes	28	88.14	14.85	3.91 (sig)
≥2 Classes	26	80.12	14.96	

Table 4

Analysis of Variance of the 2 x 2 Factorial Design

Source	df	MS	F-ratio
Treatment	1	54.27	.65 (NS)
Language Studies Background	1	18.71	.22 (NS)
Interaction	1	366.71	4.36 (sig)
Error	46	84.07	